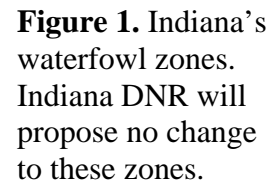


Prepared by W. Adam Phelps, Waterfowl Research Biologist, Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife

Zones and Splits in Indiana

Of those responding to the 2005 Indiana Waterfowl Hunter Survey, 65.1% prefer no change to Indiana's current zones. This works out well for Indiana hunters, as it provides the maximum possible flexibility in waterfowl regulations. We will therefore propose no change to Indiana's current waterfowl zone/split configuration (Figure 1).



Regular (Late) Season Date Recommendations

We have prepared three different proposals for regular (late) waterfowl seasons for the 2006-2007 season. The US Fish and Wildlife Service will select a liberal, moderate, or restrictive framework this summer, based on spring population and habitat surveys. We have prepared proposals for each of the three frameworks so that we are ready regardless of the final framework.

Youth waterfowl weekends:

Responses to the 2005 Indiana Waterfowl Hunter Survey indicated strong support for the youth waterfowl hunting weekends. We will propose one weekend in each of the duck hunting zones as follows. In all three zones, the youth hunt occurs before the proposed early duck split.

North Zone: Saturday, October 7 – Sunday, October 8

South Zone: Saturday, October 21 – Sunday, October 22

Ohio River Zone: Saturday, November 4 – Sunday, November 5

Ducks, coots, and mergansers:

Dates were chosen based largely on the results of the 2005 Indiana Waterfowl Hunter Survey. However, the open season dates must fit within the framework provided by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. In 2005, those dates were between the Saturday nearest 24 September and the last Sunday in January. We expect similar constraints this year.

In addition, the split configuration was chosen based on the Survey results. We found that preferences for whether a split is used and the lengths of splits are dependent on the zone in which a hunter primarily hunts, and the length of the season. For instance, North Zone duck hunters prefer a nine-day early split during a 60- or 45-day season, whereas Ohio River Zone hunters prefer a continuous season for both a 45- and 30-day season. Preferred split lengths, as well as the opening day of each split, were chosen based on these hunter survey results. However, due to the federal date limitations outlined above, and conflicts with other state hunting seasons (such as the firearms deer opener), some opening days were adjusted slightly (Table 1).

In 2005-06 the canvasback season was limited to 30 days, while the general duck season was allowed the liberal option of 60 days. We have assumed that the same restrictions on canvasback harvest will apply in the 2006-07 season (Table 2). If not, canvasbacks may be lumped back in with the other ducks. If the canvasback restriction remains in place, we will propose moving the open season to the last 30 days of the long split of duck season for the North Zone, while keeping it the first 30 days of the long split for the South and Ohio River Zones. This should maximize the number of canvasbacks in Indiana during the open season in each zone.

Canada geese:

There are four Canada goose zones in Indiana, due to the migration of Southern James Bay population through the state. Those counties where a large proportion of these birds occur (the SJBP Zone) usually have a shorter regular Canada goose season to protect this unique population.

Goose hunters responding to the 2005 Indiana Waterfowl Hunter Survey indicated a strong preference for continuous rather than split seasons in all but the longest of possible seasons

(Table 3). In addition, both duck and goose hunters indicated a preference for the duck and goose seasons to be open at the same time (to the extent that this is possible). Our Canada goose season proposals are therefore centered on the dates proposed for duck seasons, generally with the same opening days except where adjustment was required to meet federal open season date guidelines. Finally, the Ohio River Zone opener under a liberal framework was adjusted back a week to prevent it from coinciding with the deer firearms opener.

Finally, due to a changing of federal guidelines dealing with resident Giant Canada geese, we are exploring opportunities to increase harvest of resident Giants without impacting migrating Interior geese. This may include a late season (1-15 February) and/or an early management take, similar to the light goose conservation order, during the month of August.

Table 1. Proposed seasons for ducks (excluding canvasbacks), coots, and mergansers in the three Indiana duck hunting zones.

Zone	Season Framework (From USFWS)		
	Liberal (60-day season)	Moderate (45-day season)	Restrictive (30-day season)
North	Sat., Oct. 14 – Sun., Oct. 22 Sat., Nov. 4 – Sun., Dec. 24	Sat., Oct. 14 – Sun., Oct. 22 Sat., Nov. 4 – Sat., Dec. 9	Sat., Nov. 4 – Sun., Dec. 3
South	Sat., Oct. 28 – Sun., Nov. 5 Sat., Dec. 2 – Sun., Jan. 21	Sat., Oct. 28 – Sun., Nov. 5 Sat., Dec. 9 – Sat., Jan. 13	Sat., Dec. 16 – Sun., Jan. 14
Ohio River	Sat., Nov. 25 – Sun., Nov. 26 Sat., Dec. 2 – Sun., Jan. 28	Fri., Dec. 15 – Sun., Jan. 28	Sat., Dec. 30 – Sun., Jan. 28

Table 2. Proposed open season dates for canvasbacks, if the 30-day restricted season remains in place.

Zone	Season Framework (From USFWS)		
	Liberal (60-day season)	Moderate (45-day season)	Restrictive (30-day season)
North	Sat., Nov. 25 – Sun., Dec. 24	Fri., Nov. 10 – Sat., Dec. 9	Sat., Nov. 4 – Sun., Dec. 3
South	Sat., Dec. 2 – Sun., Dec. 31	Sat., Dec. 9 – Sun., Jan. 7	Sat., Dec. 16 – Sun., Jan. 14
Ohio River	Sat., Dec. 2 – Sun., Dec. 31	Fri., Dec. 15 – Sat., Jan. 13	Sat., Dec. 30 – Sun., Jan. 28

Table 3. Proposed seasons for Canada geese in the four Indiana goose hunting zones.

Zone	Season Framework (From USFWS)		
	Liberal (70-day season)	Moderate (50-day season)	Restrictive (40-day season)
North	Sat., Oct. 14 – Fri., Oct. 27 Sat., Nov. 4 – Fri., Dec. 29	Sat., Nov. 4 – Sat., Dec. 23	Sat., Nov. 4 – Wed., Dec. 13
SJBP (assumes 50-day season)	Sat., Oct. 14 – Fri., Oct. 27 Sat., Nov. 4 – Sat., Dec. 9	Sat., Nov. 4 – Sat., Dec. 23	Sat., Nov. 4 – Wed., Dec. 13
South	Sat., Oct. 28 – Sun., Nov. 5 Sat., Nov. 25 – Wed., Jan. 24	Sat., Dec. 2 – Sat., Jan. 20	Sat., Dec. 9 – Wed., Jan. 17
Ohio River	Sat., Nov. 11 – Fri., Jan. 19	Sat., Dec. 9 – Sat., Jan. 27	Sat., Dec. 16 – Wed., Jan. 24

Other geese:

The proposal for seasons on light geese, brant, and white-fronted geese will be similar to the 2005-06 season, barring a change of the framework by the Fish and Wildlife Service. Few of these geese are taken each year in Indiana.

Light Geese and Brant: Sat., Oct. 14 – Sun., Jan. 28

In addition, we will recommend a light goose conservation order be in effect from Wed., Feb. 1 – Fri., Mar. 31.

White-fronted Geese: Sat., Nov. 4 – Sun., Jan. 14

Bag limits:

Bag limits will be set within Federal guidelines when they are issued this summer. We expect that bag limits will be similar to the 2005-06 season, but there are no guarantees. In particular, daily limits on canvasback, northern pintail, hen mallard, and greater and lesser scaup may change.